

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

NEW YORK TIMES
20 MARCH 1982

U.S. Military Aides Training Hondurans Increase to Up to 100

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 19 — The United States has increased the number of its military advisers in Honduras to as many as 100 since the start of the year. The State Department said the increase was meant to help enhance that country's security in the face of a military buildup in neighboring Nicaragua.

The increase makes the number of United States advisers in Honduras the largest attached to any country in Central America. In El Salvador, for instance, the number is about 55.

Advisers Training Hondurans

A State Department official said the highest number of advisers in Honduras in 1981 was 25. As recently as last September, the number was only 14.

In response to questions, the State Department said today that United States military training personnel on temporary duty in Honduras now totaled between 90 and 100, the exact number changing as advisers came and went. Their duties were described as ranging from technical and mechanical assistance to training Honduran border patrols.

Officials said the increase, which was accomplished with a minimum of publicity, was part of a coordinated plan to

insure that Honduras would be able to withstand pressures from Cuban-backed Nicaragua and would be able to increase efforts to block arms shipments passing through Honduras from Nicaragua on the way to insurgents in El Salvador. Honduras had the largest military force in Central America until the recent buildup in Nicaragua and still has the strongest air force.

The increase in United States advisers has been accompanied by a rise in military aid to Honduras — from \$10 million in the current fiscal year to more than \$15 million in the Administration's request for the fiscal year beginning in October. In addition, Honduras would receive several million dollars as part of a \$60 million supplementary request for this fiscal year; El Salvador would get \$35 million.

A State Department official said the Administration was also trying to strengthen Honduras's civilian Government, led by Dr. Roberto Suazo Córdova, which was sworn in Jan. 27. Dr. Suazo Córdova was elected in November to succeed Gen. Policarpo Paz García, the third military officer to hold the office since the army toppled a civilian Government in 1972.

In sending additional equipment and advisers to Honduras, the Administration hopes to keep the Honduran military satisfied that its problems are being met, the official said.

The United States, as part of the buildup in the region, has also said it would like to expand air bases in Honduras for possible use by United States tactical fighter planes in an emergency.

Special Forces Sent

Dean Fischer, the State Department spokesman, when asked about the United States training teams in Honduras, said they were "training the Honduran military in such technical areas as helicopter maintenance, air-base security, patrol-boat maintenance and communications."

In addition, the United States has sent Special Forces groups, known as Green

Berets, to help train the Hondurans in patrolling the border areas with El Salvador. Two years ago the United States lent Honduras 10 Huey helicopters.

A central concern of the United States, made public this month at a briefing by Adm. Bobby R. Inman, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, is that Nicaragua is expanding several airfields for what aerial photos suggest is the eventual basing of fighter planes and that it might receive MIG aircraft from Cuba. The Central Intelligence Agency has speculated that about 70 Nicaraguans are undergoing pilot training in Cuba and Bulgaria.

The authoritative "Military Balance," published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London in 1981, said the Honduran Air Force was the largest in Central America, with a fighter-bomber squadron of 12 Super Mystères, made by France and renovated by Israel, and 6 United States-made F-86 fighters of Korean War vintage. It also has six A-37B fighters made in the United States and is getting more.